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# Landing the Job: Tips and Tricks to Prepare Students for the Job Hunt

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## Abstract

With universities, parents, and politicians paying close attention to student success after college, academic libraries are making efforts to support career readiness and preparation through collections and licensed resources as well as related instruction sessions and reference services. This paper presents examples from business librarians at three universities, covering a wide range of practical opportunities for libraries to support career preparation across campus, including partnering with Career Services for database cost sharing and career readiness workshops, teaching students to conduct company and industry research for interview preparation and salary negotiation, and out-of-the-box opportunities at career fairs and Alumni Association events.

## Introduction

“Landing the job” is a highly sought-after outcome of a college education, and a source of stress for student job-seekers. Academic libraries are stepping in to help students explore career paths, tailor their resumes and cover letters, develop target lists of potential employers, seek salary information, and leverage the available research resources and skills to increase their competitive advantage on the job market. Because of the overlap between the resources and skills used for business and career research, business librarians are well equipped to step into a guiding role and to grow library support for career readiness through partnerships with other librarians and other departments on campus. This paper details some of the career readiness activities conducted by business librarians at Purdue University, Pennsylvania State University, and University of South Florida, and provides examples of the types of collections, instruction, and programming support that libraries can offer to students on the job hunt.

## Purdue University

Purdue University is a large, Midwestern land-grant university with an enrollment of over 40,000 (Purdue Data Digest). Business librarians in the Purdue Libraries have worked over the years to create a collaborative relationship with groups across campus who are helping students with career guidance.

In 2006, the dean of the Krannert School of Management and Economics let business librarians know about feedback he had received from companies

visiting campus for job fairs. Recruiters noted that students did not have in-depth knowledge about their companies and were not researching them before speaking with them. This spurred a meeting shortly thereafter with the libraries and career offices to discuss resources and ways to address this problem. During this conversation, it was discovered that there were overlapping subscriptions, and clearly a need for better communication. This led to a strategic partnership between the Purdue Libraries, the Center for Career Opportunities, and the Krannert Professional Development Center. These groups ultimately pooled resources and were able to cancel duplicate resources, and use that money to purchase new resources all agreed would be beneficial. This collaborative process is detailed in full in George Bergstrom and Mary Dugan’s (2010) book chapter, “Increasing Resources in Tough Times: A New Funding Model for the Purdue University Career Wiki.” Currently, the group collaborates on the purchase of Career Spots Videos, CareerBeam, GoinGlobal, H1visajobs.com, JobNow, Uniworld Online, and WetFeet. The group currently meets annually to review resources and ensure everyone’s needs are still being met.

The group also came to a decision that all of the resources needed to be in a central location easily accessible by students. A joint website, currently called the Career Wiki, was created to house career research information. The site includes areas for career guides, employer research, resources listed by major, information for international students, diversity resources, as well as internship and job sites, interview and resume information, employment

data, and relocation information. The group found many other areas around campus providing career resources and information, and contacted them asking if they wanted to collaborate on content for the Career Wiki. Though not all areas responded, content was provided by seven additional areas across campus.

In addition to resources, business librarians at Purdue also provide career research instruction. This occurs both in a credit-bearing course taught by the librarians, Introduction to Management & Information Strategies, as well as in a one-shot format in courses such as Business Writing and Professional Career Management. In the Introduction to Management & Information Strategies and the Business Writing course, career research is covered the week prior to most of the campus career fairs.

The following lesson plan is used for the instruction session in Business Writing. The instructor of the course was adamant about covering WetFeet, as the career guides can be very valuable to students. This resource, however, requires students to create a unique log-in with their university e-mail address, a very time-consuming activity to include in a short 50-minute class. The business librarian reworked the course to include an activity in WetFeet as pre-work, and the instructor was glad to add it to her course as an assignment so more could be covered in class. The following is the modified lesson plan:

#### **Example Lesson Plan for One-Shot**

##### **Pre-work: WetFeet Scavenger Hunt Worksheet**

- Find three articles and three guides that will be useful to you in your job hunt. List them and why they will be helpful.

##### **In Class**

- Address any WetFeet questions. Discuss the guides students found and why they may be helpful. (5 min.)
- Think, pair, share what makes a good or bad interview. (5 min.)
- Talk about how business databases can be used to improve an interview; show Career-Wiki. (10 min.)
- Demo company research in Business Source Complete, Mergent, Privco. (10 min.)

- MadLib Activity—find an employer coming to the career fair, find info on them, and fill out MadLib section on cover letter, interview, or conversation with a recruiter. (15 min.)
- Discussion on what they found, if this will help them start conversations, write cover letters, interview, etc. (5 min.)

In addition to regular instruction sessions, librarians have been able to find fun instruction opportunities for career research all across campus. This has included doing a session for the Purdue Alumni Student Experience (PASE) group's Life After Purdue series. The session was held at a local bar, PASE provided snacks and drink tickets, and a business librarian talked about using business research in the job hunt. The large TVs usually showing sports were set up for the presentation slides. The nature of the event, outside of the university and much more laid back, created a conversational environment and an atmosphere where students stayed after the event and had longer conversations with the librarian about hunting for jobs.

In 2016, through the previously mentioned partnership with the Center for Career Opportunities and the Krannert Professional Development Center, business librarians were invited to have a table at a Mock Career Fair. This fair was developed to give students an opportunity to practice their job talk with people from actual companies that are recruiting, without the pressure of an actual job fair. The library set up a table and business librarians provided information sheets about what resources can be used for each phase of the job hunt, and also assisted students with on-the-fly company research using laptops. The first year was so successful that the libraries returned in 2017 and were even busier, connecting with more than 100 students. Due to the success of the Mock Career Fair, the same idea was attempted at an actual career fair, but with very little success.

Career research is unique in its interdisciplinary nature and can be the catalyst for cross-campus collaborations. Purdue librarians have been very successful with their efforts so far, but still see room to increase involvement in a multitude of areas, including expanded resources, shared promotion, additional instruction, and more. Pressure is currently very high to show the value of a college degree. By helping our students, we have the additional benefit of helping ourselves and our institutions.

## Pennsylvania State University

At Pennsylvania State University, the value of career development support is stressed in the university's strategic plan, which highlights the priority of "transforming education" and working to "prepare our students for success in their careers and in life" (Pennsylvania State University, 2016). Penn State's Schreyer Business Library aims to contribute to these goals primarily through building career collections and integrating career research into one-shot, course-related instruction sessions.

Career collections include a devoted section of print books in the Schreyer Business Library, as well as online paid resources such as Vault Career Intelligence, which provides career and industry overviews, guides, and company profiles and rankings. The Schreyer Business Library also subscribes to company, industry, and other business databases such as Hoover's, Mergent Intellect, IBIS World, ABI/Inform, and Business Source Premier that can be used to research employers, industries, and trends in a variety of career fields. The library also maintains a Career Resources LibGuide (<http://guides.libraries.psu.edu/career-resources>), a curated collection of free and paid resources for job exploration, interview preparation, relocation, salary information, and related research. Additionally, the Subject LibGuide for each business major features a Career Resources tab with links to related resources, such as the professional associations within a particular field of study (<http://guides.libraries.psu.edu/actuarial-science/career>).

While the Schreyer Business Library does not have cost-sharing arrangements with university department partners for career resources, business librarians coordinate with Career Services to ensure resources are complementary and nonduplicative. Penn State University's Career Services includes a Career Information Center and a librarian on staff who manages collections of print and online career materials, handles career-related reference and instruction, and serves as a contact and connection in Career Services for the Schreyer Business Library.

While the usefulness of business databases and research strategies in the job hunt is a point that can be stressed in nearly any business library instruction session, career research is a specific focus in two courses: Business First-Year Seminar and Business Writing. Business First-Year Seminar is intended to introduce students new to the Smeal College of

Business to the academic majors, career and internship opportunities, and the supportive resources available at Penn State. The Schreyer Business Library is one of the highlighted resources, and business librarians visit the 30+ sections of this course for one-shot instruction sessions. Because the students are assigned to investigate a specific company and potential employment at that firm, the session focuses on using library resources such as Vault Career Intelligence, Hoover's, and ABI/Inform to conduct research. Business Writing is another course in which business librarians emphasize the use of business resources for career research, although not all sections of this course include career-focused assignments. Students in this course are often juniors and seniors and may be actively job searching so the company and career research skills gained in the one-shot session have the potential for immediate application.

Beyond collections and instructional support, Schreyer Business Library supports student success in careers and in life through financial literacy initiatives, which is of growing interest to academic libraries as campus communities raise questions and concerns about high student loan debt, college affordability, and how to support student financial well-being. Career preparation support from libraries can guide students to the reliable resources that help them make informed decisions for both their career paths and financial health (Albarillo, 2016). For example, at Cornell University, librarians provided research and reference assistance on career and salary data sources in partnership with the career center to offer salary negotiation support to students (Geraci, Hickey, & LaVoice, 2016). Inspired by such efforts, the Student Financial Education Center, a student-to-student financial education resource supported by Schreyer Business Library, is looking for educational opportunities at the intersection of career preparation and financial literacy, such as making decisions about relocating for a first job and budgeting to buy an interview suit, to aid in the university's goal of preparing students for their careers and life after college.

## University of South Florida, Tampa

After Florida's governor, Rick Scott, issued his 2015 "Ready, Set, Work" challenge to universities around the state, many institutions took steps to enhance existing career readiness programming. Of those institutions, the University of South Florida took up the call in an effort to better prepare students to enter the workforce. The University of South Florida (USF) is a multicampus public research system with

three separately accredited campuses and a diverse student population of over 50,000 (About USF). Given USF's large size, providing comprehensive career readiness instruction has become a cross-campus initiative, a task no longer assigned only to USF Career Services.

For many years, USF Libraries has worked alongside USF Career Services to provide a collection of career-related resources to students in an area of the building known as the Job Shop. In addition to these resources, the area houses several computers intended for students who are preparing for interviews or completing applications to conduct company research. In addition to these physical resources, librarians have developed a Job and Career Research LibGuide (<http://guides.lib.usf.edu/jobandcareer>) that provides assistance for students conducting research into various companies, industries, and job opportunities. Career Services has taken an active hand in promoting this area and encouraging students to make good use of the space. In addition to helping finance the books and computers, members of the Career Services team routinely invite employers from around the country to visit USF and the Job Shop in particular to share information to students about potential job opportunities.

While USF librarians have offered instruction sessions on career research intermittently over the years, after the push by the governor to improve student career preparedness, the library has taken greater steps to create new programming in order to enhance existing efforts and provide even more in-depth assistance to students. Librarians and staff drew from the previous relationships established with Career Services to develop programming that would have an even greater reach and impact on the student population.

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First, the business librarian and manager of the Digital Media Commons met to discuss opportunities for providing creative programming. Then, a strategic partnership formed with key members of Career Services after the library presented their ideas to the team. After much discussion and negotiation, the Get the Job! Workshop series started to take shape. For the first semester, the team focused on four strategic areas: resume content, career exploration, interview preparation, and creative resume development. Attendance in the first semester far surpassed the expectations of the Get the Job! Team and inspired even further development of the series for the second semester and beyond. In following semesters, new workshops were introduced into the series, including one with an emphasis on internships and a second that focused on networking (please see Appendix A for a complete list of workshop descriptions).

Through cross-promotion from Career Services as well as USF Libraries, the series has turned into a great success that has continued to evolve and grow without any additional cost (other than time and energy!) to either department and has even begun to incorporate new units on campus and local employers.

## Conclusions

Despite the differences between the three institutions, this paper highlights various examples and opportunities for providing collections, instruction, and programming support no matter the size of the university or library. Through careful collaboration, libraries can take the next step to assist students in the job hunt by giving them the tools they need to succeed and thrive throughout college and even after they enter the workforce.

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Purdue Data Digest. (2017). Retrieved November 11, 2017, from <https://www.purdue.edu/datadigest/>

## Appendix A

### Fall 2017 Workshop Descriptions

#### ***Resume—Showcase Your True Value!***

Learn the what, how, and why of building a resume that employers and grad schools will notice. By the end of this workshop, you will understand the purpose and potential contents of a resume, know how to frame your resume based on your audience, and how to establish your brand via LinkedIn and other avenues.

#### ***Using Internships to Kickstart Your Career***

We all know the importance of gaining experience before entering the workforce, but when? How? Where? Who? And what? In this workshop we'll explore a variety of ways in which students can gain that all important experience in preparation for an amazing career!

#### ***Map Your Major to Your Future***

Learn how to make the most of your major and find tools and resources that will help you determine the best career for you. By the end of this workshop, you will be able to locate your major fact sheet and determine what careers are relevant to that major; find information about specific careers using O\*Net; conduct a catalog search for career-related resources; and access the Job and Career Research LibGuide.

#### ***Tips and Tricks for Acing Your Interview***

Learn how to wow your future employer at the interview with insider knowledge on news, company financials, and company initiatives. After this workshop, you will be able to find industry reports specific to your career field; identify resources for finding company financial information and news; and recognize various services and resources provided by USF for interview preparation.

#### ***Building Your Brand with a Custom Resume***

Make sure your resume conveys YOU to your creative industry employers! By the end of this workshop, you will be able to think critically about what your resume is trying to convey and why and be able to design a one-of-a-kind visual resume in Adobe InDesign.

#### ***Networking—Why and How You MUST (and Can) Do It!***

Research has shown that networking is an essential component in up to 80% of all successful job searches. There are many options, but which ones should YOU pursue? This workshop will help you with the ins and outs of networking—networking made easy!